

Opening Statement
Rep. Ralph M. Hall (R-TX)
Full Committee Hearing

21st Century Water Planning: The Importance of a Coordinated Federal Approach
March 4, 2009

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is the fourth hearing we are holding on water issues in the last year and a half, the second at the full committee level. There is not one district I am aware of that has not had to deal with water problems in the last few years, whether it's because there is too much of it or not enough of it. I am pleased that the Committee is taking such an interest in such an important topic and I commend the Chairman for continuing the work that started under Republican leadership of this Committee.

Three years ago, we passed, and the President signed, the National Integrated Drought Information System Act of 2006, legislation I introduced to help my constituents and many others deal with the devastating effects of prolonged drought. In the 110th Congress and again at the beginning of this Congress, this Committee moved two water bills, my Produced Water Utilization Act and Mr. Matheson's Water Use Efficiency and Conservation Research Act and the full House agreed to send these bills to the Senate on a voice vote. Last July, the Energy and Environment Subcommittee received testimony on draft legislation that is now the Chairman's National Water Research and Development Initiative Act, the bill we are here to discuss today. The amount of legislation our Committee has moved on water issues in the last few years demonstrates our awareness of the need to address the critical issues our nation faces with regards to water quality, supply and availability.

The House is not alone in recognizing the problems we face with water. The Senate has sent S.22, an omnibus lands bill that includes the SECURE Water Act, a piece of legislation that attempts to address shortcomings in our national water research strategy. Considering the Chairman's bill we are discussing here today, I hope we have an opportunity to collaborate with the Senate to create a truly comprehensive and rational approach to water research.

The testimony we will hear today from our very qualified panelists will help us better understand what opportunities exist for coordinated Federal research. It may also be wise to hear from the agencies that are most involved in Federal water research. With a new administration in place, I think we would benefit from learning how they intend to approach water research, and what kind of legislation would best help them implement a coordinated Federal strategy. Comments from the Office of Science and Technology Policy as well as other agencies might help in our authorization process.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I yield back the balance of my time.